

# Issues

for  
RHODE ISLAND  
MANAGEMENT

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Presented by: The Rhode Island  
Division of Personnel Administration

## Quest for Excellence

Excellence. We hear a lot about it these days.

In business, productivity and excellence are synonymous asserts co-author of *In Search of Excellence*, Robert H. Waterman, Jr.

How can we adopt strategies aimed at achieving excellence in state service? Here are a few ideas that will further the quest in our own workplaces:

- Leave room for staff initiative by respecting individual differences. When managers try to fit each worker to the organizational mold, failure often follows or at least resentment.
- Listen. Managers of organizations that are distinguished as excellent take time to listen to their staff. Recognize that the person doing the job is often the one who knows it best and is best qualified to suggest ways to improve it.
- Organizations often forget that employees enjoy a sense of autonomy on the job. Some managers have found that smaller work units and increased responsibility build greater creativity.
- Brainstorming sessions can work magic. Bring your workforce together, generate ideas and share information. It's a misconception to think that employees aren't interested in performance levels. Give your staff a positive message that you trust them by keeping them informed whenever possible.
- Pay attention to your staff members. Pay them compliments and encourage them. In short, extend yourself to them by being present to their needs. Often, paying attention to employees makes a bigger difference in overall performance than providing a fancy environment.

- Excellent companies are those that train people at all levels in both technical and human relations skills. As public sector managers, encourage staff to take advantage of training programs to increase their knowledge and abilities.
- Stress quality and service. Employees take pride in working towards quality and service. Show them that they play a meaningful role in serving their fellow citizens through their job.
- Praise people. In public sector, we can't give a cash bonus like private sector can. We can however, praise our employees and reinforce their good work. Often, a little praise makes a big difference.
- Remember, the ability to laugh and bring joy into the workplace is often the best way to promote new ways of doing things and to help people overcome their fear of making a mistake when trying anything new. More often than you can dream of, innovation is the child of humor.

“What people want is plain talk. It's what the stockholder wants from his corporation, what the customer wants from his bank, what the widow wants from the government office that is handling her social security. Any institution that won't take the trouble to be clear and personal will lose friends, customers and money.”

William Zinsser  
author of *On Writing Well*

## People Skills

### *Part I of a series on dealing with employees*

What do people want from their job more than anything else? If you answered money, you're wrong.

Study after study shows that people want the same thing at work as they do anywhere else: to be appreciated and valued.

Yet the #1 complaint from employees in most organizations is that bosses criticize mistakes but rarely commend good work. This isn't accidental — often a manager believes praise just isn't necessary. (“They get paid to work, don't they?”)

The usual response to good performance is no response. If you doubt this, ask yourself two questions: How many tasks did my people complete for me today? How many times did I praise their work?

Recognition is frequently regarded as “fluff”, as a way to establish “good employee relations.” What some managers fail to realize is that being “nice” has a direct impact on employee performance and productivity.

If you wonder if praise is in order, a good rule of thumb is this: if you like their work, tell them.

Coming next issue — specific methods for delivering praise and why indifference is worse than criticism.

(Reference: *Personnel Management Communications*, Report Bulletin 18, March 4, 1985, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.)



## News Briefs

**Examinations** — more and better quality civil service exams are on the way in a wide variety of occupational groupings. Subject matter experts are developing the tests now which will have an impact on the entire state system. Given Governor DiPrete's priority to accelerate civil service testing, opportunities will open up for people in the state to be tested. It's important for managers to help their people understand the importance of properly filling out applications in order to get proper credit for their education and experience.

**Personnel Consolidation Plan** — Proposed in the legislature, article LII of H-6432 consolidates personnel functions within the Division of Personnel Administration (DPA), adding to Chapter 3 of Title 36 in the General Laws of 1956, as amended. It fully describes the powers and duties of the personnel administrator to include those already required by law and also to direct, supervise, develop and authorize all personnel related administrative and technical activities including personnel administration and personnel management. It calls upon the personnel administrator to conduct innovative demonstration projects to improve state personnel management.

**Seniority Provisions** — Proposed in the legislature is an act Amending Merit System Law, senate bill S-0813, adds seniority points to the final earned rating for the test for the position in which the employee is currently serving with temporary or provisional status, providing the employee earns a passing grade. Points will be given based on total years of state service — one point or fraction of a point for each year served.



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Copy deadline for next issue — June 14.

Send news and items of interest to public sector management to: J. Hudson, Personnel Administration, 289 Promenade St., Providence, RI 02908.

## Skills You Can Bank On

Volunteers in Action is an organization that helps non-profit organizations find volunteers with professional, managerial and technical skills. The skills bank VIA runs is open for state agencies since the state is non-profit. We can request help on short-term, well-defined assignments. In return, we're able to deposit our own skills in the "bank" in case our skills are needed in the community.

To find out about the wide variety of skills available or to volunteer your skill, call Ann Honer at 421-6547.



## A Productive Definition

Productivity is easy to measure in private sector where the bottom line is profit.

For public sector managers, however, measuring productivity isn't a simple matter of applying measurements such as output or profit. Public sector's "product" is service. The manager needs to identify service goals and share them with staff — as a team, they can set standards of measurement.

We need a new standard upon which to base our evaluation of public sector productivity. Productivity is often misunderstood to mean increased work load and decreased staff.

For public sector managers, productivity is better described as a fuller use of each employee's talent, knowledge and experience. When we target our objectives to use our resources more effectively — human, financial and technical — we make a mark on productivity.

Productivity then takes on a positive meaning for each member of our work

## Wellness at Part I Public Health Number One

Cigarette smoke, says the Environmental Protection Agency, is an airborne carcinogen. The agency estimates that lung cancer — is the cause of between 500 to 1,000 deaths a year.

Employees are demanding clean air. So far, the answer is yes. What about the rights of smokers? Smoke is legal as long as they are applied fairly.

Managers, forced to deal with the issue of smoke, have several options include: dividing the workplace into a special section to serve as a smokers' lounge.

Over 300 scientific articles build a strong case for a ban on smoking. The Department of Health (DOH), Office of Health Policy and Planning, has taken a complete ban on smoking in the workplace. This is exactly what will happen at DOH's Carcinogen Control Program.

DOH's program to eliminate smoke from the workplace is a strong and positive model. DOH has carefully studied the issue and their employees for smoke-free days to come.

To begin with, the DOH committee has been studying the issue of smokers and nonsmokers who reached an agreement on smoke.

Given plenty of notice, DOH employees have been told that they find smoking is limited to restricted areas. They are offered quit-smoking classes, giving them needed support.

With legislation pending (HB 5076) that would ban smoking in the workplace, endorsement from Governor DiPrete, it's likely that the smoke issue if they haven't already.

DOH will help — they offer consultation and also offers posters and brochures bidding smokers to quit. *Smoke is Their Smoke!* Additionally, quit-smoking classes are available.

To enlist DOH's help in arresting "Public Health Enemy Number One," call Marciano at 277-6957.

(Coming next issue — Dealing with Public Health Enemy Number One)

force in light of this more forward-thinking definition. Managers who enlarge their employees' job domains and take advantage of talent also increase their employees' job satisfaction.

When assessing productivity in your office ask: How well does each person perform her or his work and how does this translate to savings of resources and time? With the saved time, managers can then use their own time more productively.





# Work

## nemy

Protection Agency, is our nation's most dangerous de-stream smoking — the inhalation of smoke by 100 lung cancer deaths a year. Their right has been upheld when tried in court. They are not a protected class and no-smoking policies

onsmokers' rights, can do so in several ways. Two smokers' and nonsmokers' areas; or ventilating a th approaches have drawbacks.

in favor of nonsmokers' rights, explains Department, Chief, Lou Marciano. He favors a third ll smoking in the workplace. Starting July, 1986, n Building.

workplace provides public sector managers with id their groundwork and is doing much to ready

developed the no-smoking plan included both ent on the importance of ridding the workplace

time to adjust to the ban on smoking. For now, . Later they will be able to participate in free rt to kick the habit.

deals with smoking in public places and strong that state management will soon deal with the

expertise to make the manager's task easier. DOH rs' consideration by reminding them that *Your ng classes are available through the department. Health Enemy #1* in your workplace, call Lou

### ISSUES

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## From the editor . . .

### Judy Hudson

Welcome to ISSUES, the newest forum for managers in Rhode Island state government. Designed to fill you in on topics of interest to public sector decision-makers, this issue debuts with two articles in response to concerns expressed by readers of pRide, the state employees newsletter. One deals with building morale and on-the-job pride. The other focuses on smoking in the workplace, starting a series on wellness in which health and health benefits issues will be discussed.

A feature you can expect to find regularly in ISSUES is a news briefs column that gives you information about personnel-related matters. Also, watch

## A Group that Fosters Pride

The Statewide Public Information Network (SPIN) works to advance agency-to-agency sharing of information, skills, and resources. SPIN sponsors monthly meetings geared towards the special needs of state agency communicators.

Since the network's inception in July, 1984, speakers at monthly meetings have addressed a variety of concerns to the group's members — channels and vehicles of communication; managing a P.R. program by objectives; creativity; audio-visual productions; and media relations.

SPIN by-laws have been prepared and a membership drive is now under way. If you are a positive-thinking individual who wants to join the group's effort — to foster pride in state services and state

## Sixty Second Writing Clinic

(Editor's note: In management circles, communication is getting a lot of attention these days and for good reason. The courts have ordered government to clear up its language. In one class action suit a federal district court in New York upheld that language used on Medicare claims is "bureaucratic gobbledegook" and "does not qualify as English." [David vs. Heckler (ED N.Y., 7-11-84) No. CA 79 C 2813]. The following article is an excerpt from a publication dedicated to clear communication, Communication Briefings, 806 Westminster Blvd., Blackwood, N.J. — free copy available upon request. It's presented to show you how to diagnose and apply intensive care to an ailing sentence.)

**Sick sentence:** "The program will contribute to the development of job incumbents in competencies required for their particular positions."

**Diagnosis:** The sentence suffers from pomposity. Worst of the lot: *job incumbents, competencies and particular positions*. Also, *development*, a verb disguised as a noun, weakens the sentence.

**Cure:** Purge the pompous prose and replace it with clearer terms, and let the verb *develop* do its work.

**Result:** "The program will help staff members develop the skills they need to do their jobs."

for a modest-looking but valuable little column on written communications.

I hope you enjoy reading ISSUES and that you'll let me know how ISSUES can best meet your needs.

## Take Your Time

Tell us how you manage time for yourself and your staff. What are some hints you could pass along to other managers in state government? We'll publish the best advice next issue. Send your timely tips to: ISSUES Editor, Division of Personnel Administration, 289 Promenade, Providence, RI 02908.

employees — you're a good candidate for membership. Other credentials for membership — you should be actively involved in communication activities (written or visual) and have your appointing authority's endorsement.

To get more information, write to: SPIN MEMBERSHIP, Division of Personnel Administration, 289 Promenade, Providence, RI 02908 (no postage necessary when sent through inter-departmental mail.)



“ One of the great fallacies American management lives by: the belief that communication is a separate, somehow extracurricular activity to be engaged in when all the meetings are over, all the paperwork is done, and all the phone calls are returned. Communication is not separate from managing. It is managing. Or, better said, management is communication.”

Roger D'Apris in *Communicating for Productivity* (from *Continuing Management Education Series*, Harper and Row, New York, 1982.)





# Timing is Everything

## Time out!

"We don't have the time to think about it."

According to experts at the Time Management Center in Grandville, Michigan that's a time-stopping expression, one that thwarts the optimal time management goal of promoting creativity which will lead to wiser time control, increased professional effectiveness and an improved quality of life among other things.

Listen for other time-stopping expressions:

• "We're too busy to be bothered."

"We've always done it that way."

"Why change? It's still working Okay."

"It's too much trouble."

And so on.

Whenever possible, take time out to show these "negative thinkers" the positive aspects of new ideas. Be kind. Managers who get a handle on underlying attitudes that prevent innovation are more likely to find ways to solve major timewasters, to delegate effectively and manage group time better.

(For additional information about time management contact the Time Management Center, P.O. Box 5, Grandville, MI 49418.)

## Tackling Timewasters Part I *Crises and "Firefighting"*

Managers in both private and public sectors know they can always expect the unexpected. With that in mind, here are a few hot tips to help douse out the flames once a "fire" has started or, better yet, to prevent one from starting.

- Attitude is important. View a crisis as an opportunity to try new ideas, develop new procedures and find better ways to do things.
- Anticipate potential problems and ready yourself with contingency plans. (If a crisis continually recurs, assess the cause and find a way to prevent it from happening again.)
- Discuss priorities with subordinates. Set deadlines for yourself and others, making sure you communicate this information clearly.

- Find positive ways of dealing with staff and keeping them highly motivated so they're encouraged to produce, not be stymied, in a crisis.
- Encourage fast transmission of information requiring timely action. Check regularly with subordinates, peers and superiors to spot potential problems on the horizon.
- Pay attention to detail. Take time to do it right the first time. Start earlier. Make sure your time estimates are realistic. Allow plenty of lead time.
- Rest and relax a few minutes before tackling difficulties so you can gear up for peak performance. Then go to it!

(Note: This is the first of a series on specific time management problems. Next issue — Meetings and Paperwork.)

## Deferred Compensation — an employee benefit with far-reaching advantages . . .

State employees can save for the future by participating in the deferred compensation program, a way of putting money aside without having to pay taxes on it, or the income it earns, until retirement when your tax rate is usually lower. Managers can assist their employees in learning more about deferred compensation by showing them an audio-visual presentation that clearly explains the deferred compensation program. To arrange to show this slide-tape production, call Judy Hudson at 277-2160.

This newsletter is sponsored by state's three carriers of the deferred compensation plan.



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